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Kalahari Violence in Perspective

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1955–70, though no homicides in his sample come from this period of active government interference (1979:384; see Draper 1978:48). Kent's suggestion (p. 704) that violent disputes at the earlier period tended to occur among groups of !Kung when they were aggregated at water holes is beside the point, unless the definition of sedentism is uncharacteristically expanded to include transient aggregations within a more generally nomadic population.

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Kalahari Violence in Perspective

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Unfortunately, anthropologists who have conducted research among the Basarwa ("Bushmen"; San) have not always been clear on specific issues, resulting in some confusion, as is evident in Knauff's comment. Homicide rates must be viewed within cultural and temporal contexts and include the influence of outside agents. Knauff states that the lack of lethal aggression at Kutse is evidence that there is less serious violence than among the !Kung, but he does not take into consideration the role of Western medicine. At Kutse I have witnessed or heard about numerous nonlethal conflicts, as well as a few potentially lethal conflicts (were it not for Western medicine) including the use of poison arrows and spears, which together add up to more conflicts per month than figures reported among nomadic groups (e.g., Draper 1978; Lee 1979). Although there are many differences between !Kung and Kutse residents, I attribute the dif-

ference in violence to an increase in year-round sedentism and aggregation.

Knaft misreads Lee when he contends that Kutse violence is less than that among nomadic !Kung, without reading further, to Lee's statement that the majority of lethal fights occurred among large aggregations around water holes, not at dispersed nomadic camps (1979:389). Unlike earlier patterns, after 1920, lengthy aggregations occurred at water holes, where fights were frequent (Lee 1979:368).¹

Knaft and I interpret Lee's (1979) characterization of !Kung violence differently. Knaft argues that !Kung violence stems from "status leveling" versus "active male status differentiation," while I propose it results from sedentism and aggregation (I acknowledge violence in nomadic societies; I suggest it did not occur to the extent or degree found at Kutse). In contrast to Knaft's note, the distribution of !Kung fights at aggregated water holes highlights the role of aggregation in promoting violence. Is Knaft suggesting that "status leveling" only occurs at water holes?

Moreover, Knaft confuses intergroup with intragroup violence and Namibia with Botswana when he counters my suggestion that the relatively high homicide figures Lee records prior to 1956 are due to minimal outside intervention by Bantu-speakers in !Kung communities. The historical "evidence" Knaft cites to support his claims involves *intergroup* and, more important, *intercommunity* violence between Bantu-speakers and !Kung; he does not demonstrate that it pertains to *intracommunity* violence in general or *intra-!Kung* (much less *intra-Kutse*) violence in particular. My article was on *intracommunity* violence and the internal mechanisms used to resolve it. Knaft cites Gordon (1984), who convincingly demonstrates that in Namibia (not Botswana) prior to 1956—a date Lee used for the last known homicide in the Dobe area—there was overt conflict between Herero and !Kung (which Knaft generalizes to all Basarwa, including Kutse, where there are no Herero or !Kung). Even so, this does not contradict the fact that post-1956 "the Tswana court has become the major means of conflict resolution among the !Kung" in Botswana (Lee 1979:396), because !Kung prefer to have serious conflict arbitrated by an outsider (Lee 1979:396).

The instigator of the gang beating at Kutse (Kent 1989) was not an example of Knaft's position "that a more overt and chronically aggressive ethos develops as adult male status rivalries become prominent and politically foregrounded"—at least not for the reasons he

proposes. Maholesa, the instigator, is not chronically aggressive (seldom fights, with the exception recorded), whereas G/enidzi, the aggressor, has no desire to be chief and would never be in a position to achieve that status. It is first necessary to determine whether male status is always based on aggression and rivalry. While this may be at least partly true for American and other societies, I hesitate to generalize it to all societies, much less to all groups of Basarwa.

Confusion is also evident in Knaft's statement that my choice of the term "Basarwa" to designate Khoe-speakers demonstrates my "assumption of political legitimacy in superordinate control" because Wilmsen (1989) states that Zhu do not refer to themselves as Basarwa. The Botswana government dislikes the term "Bushmen" because it considers it a remnant of the colonial period. San was used as a replacement. This is a derogatory Khoi-khoi (Hottentot) term that most Khoe neither use nor understand; or if they do, they understand it as a racial slur and a serious insult (Cashdan 1983:64; Guenther 1977; Silberbauer 1989). Zhu, the term Knaft misunderstood as referring to all Basarwa, actually refers only to speakers of !Kung and not at all to the groups at Kutse.² !Kung and the Kutse Basarwa are two different groups whose languages belong to different linguistic families (Barnard 1988). At Kutse there are several linguistic groups, including G/wi and G//ana (Kent 1990). Therefore, my choice of the term "Basarwa," a Setswana word meaning "people of the wilderness" (Guenther 1986:45; Schapera 1930:31), for the Kutse population and for Khoe-speakers in general is appropriate and has nothing to do with an "assumption of political legitimacy in superordinate control," as Knaft asserts.

Lastly,³ Knaft supports his stance by stating that there are stable sedentary societies without consolidation of political power, such as in New Guinea, despite extremely high rates of internal violence. However, the same authors Knaft cites as proof discuss the presence of "big men" who are conspicuously assertive and glib with political prestige derived from their role as pig brokers, giving them limited authority in inter-ward and intervillage conflict (Koch 1974:64–65). Groups such as the Kamano have both village warrior leaders and lineage leaders with official sanctions (Berndt 1962:174–175). Lineage leaders can even be found among the more egalitarian coastal New Guinea groups (Mimi Kahn, personal communication, 1990). As I stated in my original article, it is inappropriate to indiscriminately lump nomadic or sedentary Ba-

sarwa, who lack such lineage or other types of centralized political authorities, with groups who have well-established forms of political centralization (be they achieved or ascribed status, an individual or council). New Guinea conflict among sedentary peoples is probably not the same nor the result of the same factors as that among the recently sedentary Basarwa at Kutse.

Basarwa data offer many insights into past, present, and future behavior and are valuable for cross-cultural models. I hope I have been able to clarify some areas of confusion concerning the Basarwa, and I thank Knauf for pointing them out.

Notes

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¹Lee states: "Instead of spending 9 months of the year dispersed and 3 months of the year together, they had reversed the ratio. Many !Kung lived at /Xai/xai for 9 months in the winter and spring and dispersed only for a short period at the height of the fresh food season in late summer and early fall" (1979:368).

²Other anthropologists have noted that there are Zhu who refer to themselves by the term Basarwa and who do not consider it derogatory (e.g., Hitchcock, personal communication, 1990).

³I already explained in my original article that beer acts as a facilitator and not as a cause of violence, unlike what Knauf contends in his commentary. Furthermore, Knauf apparently misunderstood who I was referring to when he wrote that "nucleated settlements . . . owe their existence in significant part to the power of chiefs, as she herself notes in a different context." In this case I was discussing mobility patterns in general and my citation was to the influence of Batswana (Bantu-speakers) chiefs on the mobility of their Batswana subjects and not about Basarwa, who are a separate group of people, although I take responsibility for not making that point clear.

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